

MODERN LANGUAGES

A Portrait of Current Practice in Scottish Schools



February 2007

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Overview of modern languages inspections 2004-06

1. SECONDARY

Quality Indicators (QIs) from *How good is our school?* used:

QI 3.2 quality of the teaching process

QI 3.3 quality of pupils' learning experience

QI 3.4 meeting pupils' needs

The four point scale of evaluation (used up until June 2005)

4	very good	major strengths
3	good	strengths outweigh weaknesses
2	fair	important weaknesses
1	unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

academic session 2004-05

number of modern languages departments inspected: 16

	1	2	3	4
QI 3.2	-	1 (6%)	12 (75%)	3 (19%)
QI 3.3	-	3 (19%)	10 (62%)	3 (19%)
QI 3.4	1 (6%)	2 (13%)	9 (56%)	4 (25%)

The six point scale of evaluation (used from September 2005 onwards)

6	excellent	outstanding/sector leading
5	very good	major strengths
4	good	important strengths with areas for improvement
3	adequate	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
2	weak	important weaknesses
1	unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

academic session 2005-06

number of modern languages departments inspected: 13

	1	2	3	4	5	6
QI 3.2	-	1 (8%)	5 (38%)	6 (46%)	1 (8%)	-
QI 3.3	-	3 (23%)	7 (54%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)	-
QI 3.4	-	6 (46%)	4 (31%)	3 (23%)	-	-

2. PRIMARY

Since the beginning of session 2005/06, HMIE has carried out a number of focussed visits to primary schools to look at provision for modern languages. Some of these visits were to look at good practice. Others were part of a special inspection task looking at attainment in curricular areas other than English language and mathematics. There follows a very brief overview of our findings.

STRENGTHS

- some vg/excellent attainment in language skills seen
- cultural awareness is very well developed in some cases

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- pace too slow in some lessons – not enough new language learned
- need more opportunities for pupils to speak the language, link sentences, make creative use of language

More detail will be shared in due course.

Learning and teaching in modern languages

teaching is very good when teachers:

- place lessons in context and share the aims and purposes of lessons and activities with learners
- adopt a variety of teaching approaches
- make effective use of ICT
- explain new points of languages clearly
- ask questions which make learners think and require them to give extended answers
- encourage learners with effective use of praise

inspectors have identified the following common areas for improvement in teaching:

- teachers do not explain the purpose of activities to learners
- lessons are too teacher-led, all interactions are through the teacher

.....

pupils' learning experiences are very good when pupils:

- are working in a stimulating physical environment which supports learning
- understand what they are supposed to be learning and know what they need to do to improve
- have well organised jotters and folders and know how to look something up if they have forgotten or don't know it
- have opportunities to collaborate in pairs and groups
- are able to work independently and have some choice about what they do

inspectors have identified the following common areas for improvement in pupils' learning experiences:

- out of date posters, no maps & not enough pupils' work on display
- pupils don't know the purpose of what they are doing, what they are working towards or what they need to do to improve
- pupils are passive
- pupils are too dependent on the teacher & don't know how/where to look things up, work things out for themselves
- not enough collaboration in groups
- slow pace, spending too long on straightforward tasks and not achieving enough in a lesson
- no choice of activities

pupils' learning needs are very well met when:

- they undertake a variety of interesting & challenging tasks
- teachers use a variety up-to-date resources and not just the core text book
- high attaining pupils are well challenged
- lower attaining pupils receive sufficient support to enable them to achieve success
- modern languages teachers collaborate successfully with learning & behaviour support staff to provide additional support & challenge for pupils

inspectors have identified the following common areas for improvement in how pupils' learning needs are met:

- boring & unchallenging activities
- very little use of resources other than the core text book – “culture free” tasks
- teachers expecting pupils to make active use of language without sufficient support
- all pupils doing the same activities, no account taken of prior learning
- learning and behaviour support staff not well deployed

Improving Scottish Education: the agenda for modern languages

Published in February 2006, the *Improving Scottish Education* (ISE) report has three main messages:

- Scottish education does many things well and some things particularly well;
- the report identifies real strengths in Scottish education alongside areas which are priorities for improvement;
- our education system needs to build on its strengths to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex and uncertain future.

The challenges of the 21st century include:

- globalisation
- moving up the 'value chain' – good is no longer good enough
- the changing demographic balance
- the impact of technology
- employers' need for generic and 'soft-skills'
- the demand for quality and customisation

Agenda arising from the report

Scottish education needs to:

- tackle underperformance
- develop a curriculum and qualifications which are fit for purpose
- continue to raise attainment and find new ways of recognising achievement
- ensure consistently high quality learning and teaching, including the use of ICT
- focus on the individual learner, ensuring no-one is excluded

High levels of teacher professionalism and dynamic and visionary leadership will be required if the agenda is to be tackled successfully.

The Scottish Executive's policy initiative *Ambitious, Excellent Schools*, including *A Curriculum for Excellence* provides a context for the agenda to be taken forward.

What does this mean for modern languages?

The following is an abbreviated extract from a presentation given by Jane Renton HMI at a conference organised by the Royal Society of Edinburgh in March 2006, entitled 'Languages in Scotland - What's the problem?'

Modern languages can contribute effectively to the aims of *A Curriculum for Excellence*. We need to develop young Scots as confident and successful language learners and as responsible and active international citizens who can make an effective contribution to 21st century society.

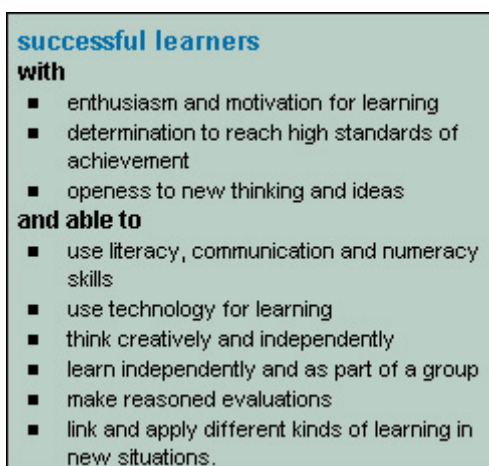
Modern languages education in Scotland has many strengths and must now build on these. A number of improvements are required. We need greater emphasis on the levels of proficiency achieved, more relevant course content, greater flexibility within the curriculum to meet the needs of individuals and a more coherent framework of attainment and assessment. We need to ensure that sufficient trained staff are available to teach modern languages in primary schools, and that all teachers receive quality professional development. We need clearly defined outcomes

relating to learning and achievement in modern languages, and to monitor closely progress against defined targets of uptake, as well as levels of achievement.

High quality language learning should be part of every young Scot's education. Teachers must ensure that pupils' experiences of learning another language are enjoyable and rewarding. At the same time, Scottish society should not be unrealistic about the levels of proficiency which can be attained over a relatively short period of time. Partial competence, rather than a native speaker's level of fluency, is both a realistic and a valuable aim.

Monolingualism is curable!

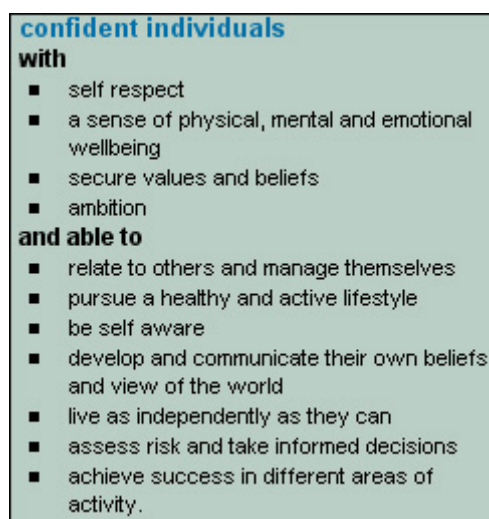
A Curriculum for Excellence: the “4 capacities”



Examples of good practice seen by inspectors in an excellent modern languages department:

In one Edinburgh school, pupils in S4 Credit classes were able to read very challenging texts and give extended PowerPoint presentations on interesting cultural topics.

Through participation in the school's Comenius project, a number of pupils had achieved school awards for European citizenship which recognised their achievements in language proficiency and organising social programmes for foreign visitors.



Examples of good practice seen by inspectors in an excellent modern languages department:

S6 pupils spoke confidently about their reasons for studying languages. They stated that: 1. languages give you confidence – having to do presentations etc.; 2. senior pupils support S1 pupils in class; 3. languages increase your job prospects; 4. knowing a language means you can communicate with people who speak that language; 5. it's respectful to learn others' languages

In S2 French, the teacher e-mailed a template to pupils to allow them to prepare a PowerPoint presentation on 'Ma Ville' as homework.

Pupils at all stages regularly work at their own pace through a menu of learning activities. In one S3 Spanish lesson, pupils were editing their video of the Scottish Parliament as part of the ongoing activities.

In S2 Spanish, pupils themselves chose which vocabulary to note from a text they had read.



Examples of good practice seen by inspectors in an excellent modern languages department:

In S2 Spanish, pupils organised themselves into groups and worked collaboratively to read interesting texts about ancient South American civilisations. They were given a poem written by the King of the Aztecs in the 15th century to read as homework.

In S4 French, pupils worked collaboratively in groups to read challenging texts downloaded from the internet on the theme of international child poverty.

In S6 French, pupils watched a video clip of the previous evening's news programme from a French TV channel. They showed good comprehension and were able to discuss in French what they had seen.

Pupils in two associated primaries corresponded with pen friends at the secondary's partner school in Spain.

<p>effective contributors</p> <p>with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ an enterprising attitude ■ resilience ■ self-reliance <p>and able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ communicate in different ways and in different settings ■ work in partnership and in teams ■ take the initiative and lead ■ apply critical thinking in new contexts ■ create and develop ■ solve problems.

Examples of good practice:

Pupils across the country are invited by their local Rotary club groups to go on Euroschola trips. Pupils debate in the foreign language with students from around the EU in the European Parliament chamber.

In Edinburgh and East Lothian, a number of senior pupils undertake work shadowing in Austria, Spain and Germany.

On a more manageable scale is the production of a play, perhaps as part of the Rencontres Théâtrales project from the French Institute, or even within the classroom.

Or pupils can write text in the foreign language for the school magazine or website.

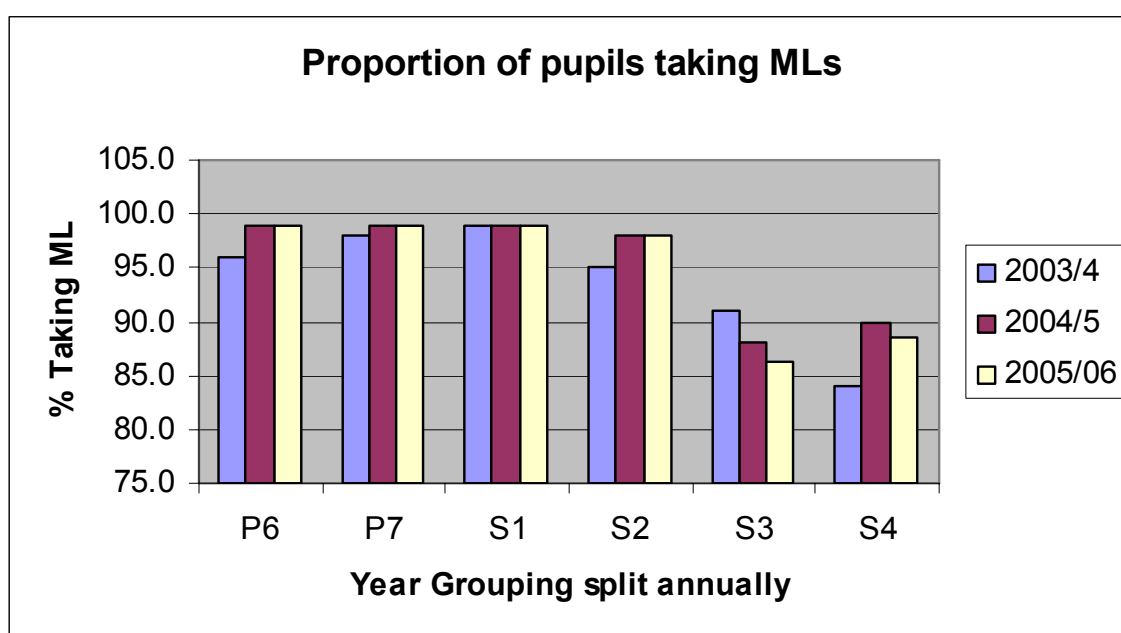
Monitoring of use of the Scottish Executive Languages Fund

Overview of education authority returns to the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) 2004-06

In January 2002, the Scottish Executive set up the Languages Fund through which specific funding was allocated to all education authorities to assist them in taking forward their part of the agenda arising from *Citizens of a Multilingual World*. Each year, SEED asks education authorities to provide information relating to the use and impact of the funding.

HMIE assists SEED in its analysis of the information submitted by education authorities and there follows an overview of two aspect of particular interest.

1. Numbers studying modern languages



2. Approaches to delivering training for modern languages in primary schools (MLPS) 2004/05

Nationally, there continues to be a need to provide in-service training for a large number of teachers, to ensure provision for modern language education in primary schools.

Education authorities were asked to provide information on the nature of training provided for teachers of MLPS during session 2004/05. There follows a summary of the information provided.

- No education authority was using the former national 27-day training model.
- Authorities had developed a range of different training models designed to meet the needs of teachers in their areas.
- Models were subject to on-going review and evaluation in all cases.
- The time allocated to training varied considerably. For example one authority provided 20 days, another 25 afternoons and another 30 hours.

- In many cases, training took place in afternoon or twilight sessions, to reduce the need for teacher supply cover. In some cases, training was supplemented by visits to schools by development officers or tutors. In one case, training was delivered exclusively by on the job coaching.
- There were a number of examples of education authorities working in collaboration to provide MLPS training. Three authorities worked together to provide weekend immersion sessions for teachers in training.
- A few authorities provided differentiated training for teachers according to their level of proficiency in the language on starting training.
- A notable development was the post-graduate certificate in MLPS provided by Paisley University, consisting of 4 modules. This had been adopted by 3 authorities in the west of Scotland. One authority had set the completion of 2 modules as a minimum requirement for teaching MLPS.

Training was delivered by a variety of staff including secondary teachers, seconded development and support officers, quality improvement officers, tutors who were native speakers of the language and teacher education staff from universities. Foreign language assistants often supported the training.

HMIE Good Practice in Modern Languages Conference June 2006: case studies

The conference took place at Stirling University and featured examples of good practice in modern languages education 3-18. The following brief case studies are of particular interest.

1. Early Foreign Language Learning

In East Renfrewshire, French is taught at all stages from pre-school throughout primary. The programme for pupils in nursery to P3 is progressive. A working party is currently reviewing the teaching from P4 to P7 as some material previously used is now covered at a much earlier stage.

Example of nursery children's language learning experiences observed by HMIE.

Children were in 4 groups and worked with a foreign language assistant in rotation. Children were highly motivated, listened carefully and enjoyed trying to use French words. They listened very carefully to the assistant's accent and some tried to pronounce words in the same way. The assistant used a variety of props and puppets to stimulate children's imagination and to encourage them to join in. Nursery staff joined in with the activity and then used some of the vocabulary once back in the playroom. Activities were fun and children clearly enjoyed the experience. This was particularly evident during snack time when children learned the French words for bread and the fruit they were eating. They also used numbers and counting in a real-life context.

2. School of Ambition

St Ninian's High School, Kirkintilloch, East Dunbartonshire has been awarded School of Ambition status, with a focus on modern languages. The aim of the project is to build on the success of the school's modern languages department. The school hopes to encourage the adoption of good practice, including the use of ICT, across all departments. At the time of HMIE's visit in April 2006, the school was at an early stage in identifying exactly which aspects of practice in the modern languages department led to its success and considering how they could be disseminated.

HMIE observed a *Languages Day* for S1 pupils, organised in conjunction with the University of Strathclyde Summer Academy. Pupils had been released from normal timetable for the day and worked in groups, facilitated by Strathclyde University students. The aim was to produce a brief drama sketch and accompanying story book in French, building on language they had learned in class. At the end of the day, pupils performed their sketches to each other and evaluated their experiences. The activity provided good opportunities for pupils to collaborate with each other and to use their French for a real purpose.

3. Cross-curricular project at Lenzie Academy

A two-week cross-curricular unit of work on the theme of fair trade was delivered to all S2 pupils by three departments: modern languages, modern studies and home economics. In French, pupils looked at the background to fair trade, concentrating on 'les pays francophones' and compared the daily routine of a Cameroon pupil to that of a pupil in Scotland. The unit led to reading, writing and speaking outcomes for 5-14. Pupils had the opportunity to use French at a high level and on a 'grown up' theme which included issues relating to global citizenship. They read challenging texts in a variety of styles, then completed a writing task consisting of either a letter on personal routine, or a leaflet on fair trade for Level F. The speaking task was a

presentation linked to the writing. Pupils also had to produce a poster or advert for a fair trade product of their choosing. The project had clearly captured the imagination and enthusiasm of the pupils.

4. Effective leadership: the role of Principal Teacher Curriculum

HMIE visited Broxburn Academy, West Lothian where a teacher of modern languages has been appointed to the role of Principal Teacher Curriculum (PTC), with responsibility for English, modern languages and media studies. The PTC is expected to play a key role in quality assurance and promoting best practice in learning and teaching. She has a 50% teaching timetable. The school provides extra time for departmental meetings which focus on learning and teaching.

HMIE observed the following key aspects of good practice in modern languages:

- very structured approach to course planning with timescales to maintain pace;
- grammar taught systematically;
- ICT used as a tool to add variety and consolidate work (HMIE observed S3 French pupils planning a PowerPoint presentation on future plans on laptops and S3 beginners Spanish pupils putting their writing piece onto a “blog”);
- criteria for success at each stage, and for particular skills, shared with pupils and reinforced in lessons – and also shared with parents;
- high expectations - pupils were encouraged to look at the criteria for upper grades;
- target setting and tracking are taken very seriously by the school and the department - at target-setting interviews, pupils are encouraged to write down what they need to do to attain the next level;

With regard to English and media studies, the PTC visits lessons and has given teachers a list of the good practice she has observed. She tracks pupils’ progress in English and interviews pupils who are not achieving as predicted, comparing this with their progress in modern languages. She is encouraging a more structured approach to writing in the English department, with a greater emphasis on sharing the criteria for success, as in modern languages.

Key Modern Languages Documents & Resources

Modern Foreign Languages Environment (MFLE)

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/mfle/>

HMIE website

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk>

HMIE report: *Progress in addressing the recommendations of Citizens of a Multilingual World*

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hmiecoaml.pdf>

HMI Effective Learning & Teaching in Scottish Secondary Schools: Modern Languages (dates from 1990, but Chapters 6-11 still very relevant)

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/elml.htm>

Talking for Scotland pack

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/Talking%20for%20Scotland%20NEW.pdf>

Improving Scottish Education (HMIE February 2006):

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hmieise.pdf>

Journey to Excellence (HMIE March 2006)

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hgiosjte.pdf>

Teaching Scotland's Children (HMIE January 2007)

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hmietsc.pdf>

A Curriculum for Excellence (ACfE) website

<http://www.acurriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/index.asp>

Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) report: *Languages in Scotland - What's the problem?* (published September 2006)

http://www.royalsoced.org.uk/events/reports/2005-2006/languages_in_scotland.pdf

Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching (SCILT) website

<http://www.scilt.stir.ac.uk/>

Learning & Teaching Scotland (LTS) website

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/>